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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TAIPEI 001085

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [CH](#) [TW](#)

SUBJECT: TAIWAN REACTS NEGATIVELY TO ANTI-SECESSION LAW

REF: A. 3/12/05 AIT-EAP/TC E-MAIL

[B](#). TAIPEI 773

Classified By: AIT Director Douglas Paal, Reason: 1.4 (B/D)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Taiwan issued a strong formal reaction to the PRC National People's Congress (NPC) March 14 passage of the Anti-Secession Law. Mainland Affairs Council (MAC) Chairman Joseph Wu, speaking for the government, condemned the PRC move as "provocative" and in violation of the will of the Taiwan people and international community. Taiwan officials dismissed late revisions made to the final text as insufficient and insincere. President Chen Shui-bian did not offer an immediate reaction on March 14. However, on March 12 he called on Taiwan's people and opposition parties to join a March 26 demonstration to protest the new law. Officials say the rally is being organized in order to pre-empt potentially destabilizing alternative proposals, such as a referendum or countervailing law. Nevertheless, Chen administration officials express concern that the rally could be hijacked by the Taiwan Solidarity Union (TSU) to promote Taiwan independence themes that would exacerbate cross-Straits tensions. The opposition offered mixed reactions to the PRC move. While People First Party (PFP) Chairman James Soong and the KMT Spokesman credited Beijing for toning down the final version of the text, other senior Pan-Blue officials, including KMT Taipei Mayor Ma Ying-jeou and Legislative Speaker Wang Jin-pyng, blamed Beijing for fueling tensions. However, the volume and tone of Taiwan reaction was clearly divided along partisan lines. End Summary.

MAC: Strong Condemnation

[2](#)2. (C) MAC Chair Joseph Wu issued a statement on March 14 urging the international community to "Strongly Condemn" the PRC over its enactment of the Anti-Secession Law earlier in the day. Wu's statement served as the Chen administration's formal response to the PRC legislative move, but MAC and National Security Council (NSC) officials tell AIT that Premier Frank Hsieh is expected to make a further official comment on March 15. The MAC statement, using often emotional language, accused Beijing of "hurting the feelings of the Taiwan people" and warned that the new law will "have serious consequences for security in the East Asia region."

[3](#)3. (C) Taiwan officials dismissed revisions made to the final text of the Anti-Secession Law as insufficient and insincere. National Security Bureau (NSB) Director Hsueh Shih-min publicly accused Beijing of playing word games in order to distract public attention from the seriousness of the text. National Security Council (NSC) Senior Advisor for cross-Straits affairs Chen Chung-hsin told AIT that most officials (himself excepted) viewed the changes over the conditions for resorting to "non-peaceful measures" as a change for the worse. MAC Senior Secretary Jan Jyh-horng, who shared the text of Taiwan's response with AIT on March 12 (AIT translation sent to EAP/TC, Ref A), said that the PRC's late revisions had no impact on the government's planned strong reaction to passage of the law.

Chen's Next Step

[4](#)4. (C) President Chen Shui-bian did not immediately respond to the passage of the Anti-Secession Law. However, Chen had strongly criticized the law during a March 12 speech to the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP). Chen accused Beijing of planning to use force to destroy Taiwan's democratic achievements and urged one million people to take to the streets in protest on March 26. Presidential Office Secretary Liu Shih-chung told AIT shortly after the March 12

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speech that Chen will wait several days before issuing any further statements. Liu said that the substance and tone of Chen's formal response will depend heavily on how he assesses "domestic and international reaction" to the new law.

Pan-Blue Takes Its Own Road

15. (C) Attempts by the Chen administration to forge a united front on the PRC law appear to be faltering. KMT Spokesman Chang Jung-kung expressed regret over the PRC's law, but credited Beijing for moderating language in the final text. Taipei Mayor and KMT Vice Chairman Ma Ying-jeou convened a press conference on March 12 to register opposition to the PRC law on behalf of local leaders in Taiwan. However, Ma used considerably milder language than the MAC statement and urged leaders in Taiwan to avoid actions that could exacerbate the situation. PFP Chairman James Soong issued a statement along the same lines. Like Ma, Soong's remarks were as critical of Taiwan independence activists as they were of Beijing. Soong called on President Chen to stick to the joint Chen-Soong policy platform (Ref B) announced on February 24 in order to stabilize the situation.

16. (C) Soong's comments are likely to exacerbate negative reaction from pro-independence elements of the Pan-Green base to the PRC's new law. MAC's Jan told AIT the government is particularly concerned about attempts by the TSU to hijack the themes for the March 26 rally. Jan said if the March 26 rally is dominated by calls to change the name of the country or enact a new constitution, Beijing will likely react with more pressure. The NSC's Chen said that he has urged academic and media contacts on the Mainland to cease open criticism of the rally in order to help the government in Taipei keep control of the event.

17. (C) The TSU's reaction to the PRC move was predictably theatric. After burning a PRC flag, TSU leaders announced the start of a 24-hour hunger strike to protest the Anti-Secession Law. A number of leading DPP pro-independence figures, including legislator Trong Chai, joined the TSU in its public protests. The TSU also renewed their call to hold an anti-China referendum and for the enactment of an Anti-Annexation Law. MAC's Jan expressed concern that the text of the TSU's draft law was not as radical as expected. While the government does not endorse enacting countervailing legislation, Jan cautioned that the TSU's text may appeal to many DPP legislators.

Comment: Preventing a Downward Spiral

18. (C) As expected, Taiwan's formal position on the Anti-Secession Law is being driven by domestic political calculations. Unsurprisingly, the camps that espouse independence are reacting more heatedly than those that do not. Chen's dark Green supporters were already upset over his February 24 cohabitation agreement with the PFP's Soong. Passage of this law, and the Pan-Blue's relatively muted reaction to it, is likely to only harden their demands for the President to take a tougher line against Beijing. The Pan-Blue's soft response is likely to further pressure from Chen's deep Green base to take harder measures towards Beijing. The PRC's public diplomacy in the coming two weeks could also influence the course of events in Taiwan. Taiwan officials say PRC Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing's March 11 dismissal of Taiwan as a local government helped hard-liners at the MAC win an internal debate over how to craft Taiwan's initial response to the Anti-Secession Law (Septel). By a similar token, moves by Beijing to soften its public line in the coming days could bolster the hands of moderates in future policy battles. Nevertheless, the PRC's enactment of the law has already handed pro-independence activists a major PR victory and setback efforts to inject moderation into Taiwan's cross-Strait policy debate.

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